national consensus, has laid down a comprehensive framework that guides the development of education in its entirety. It continues to be relevant and has stood the test of time. It does not require any revision/modification at present.

National plan for widows'

225. SHRI DARA SINGH CHAUHAN:
SHRIMATI GURCHARAN KAUR:

Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to have a national plan for widows who are part of the society but are being discriminated against and marginalised; if so, the details thereof;

(b) whether Government have made any survey of the estimated widows abandoned by their families in Ashrams, and are subjected to a strict dress and diet codes and economic deprivation;

(c) whether a global meet on widows was held in February, 2002 in New Delhi to draw attention towards their exploitation; and

(d) if so, the subjects discussed, the decisions taken and the action being taken by Government on the recommendations/decisions?

THE MINISTEROF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRIMATI SUMITRA MAHAJAN): (a) The National Policy for the Empowerment of Women adopted by the Government calls for undertaking measures and programmes to provide for women belonging to specially disadvantaged sections such as disabled, widows, elderly women, deserted women etc. with special assistance. A Central Action Plan for implementation of the Policy guidelines is on the anvil. The Government has also launched a new scheme called 'Swadhar' for women in distress which would take care of the needs of all categories of women in difficult circumstances, including destitute women and widows needing care and protection.

(b) Uttar Pradesh State Social Welfare Advisory Board had conducted a survey on the situation of widows and other women in Vrindavan and adjoining areas in 1998. The West Bengal Commission for Women had also conducted a survey of Bengali women in Vrindavan and submitted an interim report to the State Government of West Bengal in 2000. Apart from above, the National

Commission for Women (NCW) had commissioned a study of these widows in 1996. One of the survey reports mentions that such women have taken on the dress and life style of widows in order to fit into the local environment.

(c) and (d) A Statement is annexed.

Statement

Guild of Service, a voluntary organisation, had organised a Conference 'Capacity Building of Marginalised Women : Widows' in New Delhi during 1st to 3rd February, 2002.

In the conference, among other things, factors contributing to multiple and very often hidden human rights violation of widows in South Asian countries and need for properly interpreting and understanding religious texts and scriptures which calls for respect for women were discussed. The Conference adopted a declaration calling for abolition of customs, practices and traditions that discriminate against women through legal reforms, action against those who violate the physical, social and human dignity of widows, reviewing laws to ensure widows get their just share of inheritance and mainstreaming widows through social security and economic empowerment schemes.

The Government has taken a number of steps that covers the recommendations and are for the rehabilitation the marginalised women, especially those living in Vrindavan and adjoining areas. These include:

- Constitution of a Central Committee headed by the Minister of State for Women & Child Development to *inter-alia*, chalk out a strategy for rehabilitation of the marginalised women;
- Government has launched a new scheme for rehabilitation of women in difficult circumstances, called 'Swadhar' under which two projects have been considered for Uttar Pradesh;
- Government is implementing schemes such as. Setting up of Employment-cum-Income Generating Units for Women (NORAD), Support to Training and Employment Programme (STEP), Socio-Economic Programme (SEP), Condensed Courses of Educational and Vocational Training for Women (CCE&VT) under which preference is given to such marginalized women in the matter of providing assistance.

The Rashtriya Mahila Kosh is also implementing programmes, with special focus on marginalized women, under which financial assistance is provided for implementing self employment programmes through Non-Governmental Organisations. Other schemes such as National Old Age Pension Schemes and the Social Defence Schemes provide for pension and rehabilitation of such marginalised women;

- The State Government of U.P. has also established two shelter houses and provided necessary arrangements of medical care and protection of the inmates living in these shelter houses.

Working Women's hostel in Punjab

†226. SHRIMATI GURCHARAN KAUR: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) the number and details of working women's hostel in operation in Punjab, district-wise;

(b) the quantum of amounts issued to the State Government under the head during the last three years;

(c) whether new hostels are likely to be set up in the State; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTEROF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRIMATI SUMITRA MAHAJAN): (a) The information is annexed in the Statement (*See* below).

(b) There is no provision for release of funds directly to the State Government under the scheme.

(c) and (d) The likelihood of new hostels being set up in the State will depend upon the receipt of complete proposals from the State Government. No proposal from Punjab is pending with the Department.

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.